

INTERLUDES

AND OTHER VERSES

LILLIE BUFFUM CHACE WYMAN



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INTERLUDES AND OTHER VERSES

Mrs.
By LILLIE BUFFUM CHACE WYMAN



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INTRODUCTION

MOTTO

THE Gray Dawn, at Carmel,
Comes floating from the sea;
She's free from joys and sorrows,
From light and darkness free.
Her sunless hour of being
Is but a wistful dream;
Oh, pity her, you human phantoms:
You also only seem.

JEANIE SPRING PEET.

CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA, CALIFORNIA
Christmas Day, 1910

I dedicate this volume to the memory of John Crawford Wyman, concerning whom it was well said, "To those in need, he was charity itself; and to all he was gentle with the courtesy of a true gentleman."

L. B. C. W.

SEEMED my soul existent to love thee,
As in Summer's sweet weather
Loved it rose that was Yorkist,
 Rose that in June
 Did its petals combine,
Like flakes drifted down from the moon;

Now, my soul, far distant below thee,
 In the Summer is nether,
Misses rose that was Yorkist,
 Rose, from whence soon
 Fell the petals divine,
Like notes that are lost from a tune;

If I lift up my lyre and accord it,
Benison to my song, wilt thou award it?

A DIRGE

CLEAR be the minstrelsy,
Him, that would sigh;
Sweet be the phantasy
Where doth he lie!

Hymnal of poesy
Like lullaby,
Unto his ecstasy
Fain render I;

Doth he remember,
There now on high,
How, in September,
Maple leaves amber,
Up to the sky,
On the winds clamber?



THE IRISH CHIEFTAIN

PRELUDE

I SAT, long since, within thy chamber, Love,
And saw, upon thy whitely changing face,
A shadow, like a pencil, making trace
How passed the Deathly Angel close above;

I heard his whisper on thy breathing move,
As he had caught it from thy lips apace,
And filled it with far echoes out of space
Whose fateful voice he was the Master of;

And, as I saw and sadly harkened, came
The story of O'Neil into my mind
And laid upon my singing accents claim,

So forth did ancient faith and sorrow flow
On rhythms, that my pulses had combined,
As, from mine own, I sang of Ireland's woe.

THE O'NEIL

Hugh, Earl of Tyrone, was the last Irish chieftain to bear the title, "The O'Neil." An able, cultured man, he married clandestinely the sister of Sir Henry Bagnal, the Lord Marshal, who opposed the match. Tyrone then joined the forces endeavoring to free Ireland, and Bagnal, who commanded an English army, was slain in battle with Tyrone's confederates. For several years Tyrone maintained himself against the English. He treated with Essex at the ford of Lagan in behalf of Ireland, and Essex agreed there to an armistice in order to lay the grievances of the Irish before Elizabeth. The Queen angrily disavowed Essex's Irish policy and sent Mountjoy in his place to Ireland. To him Tyrone was finally forced to surrender, evidently in the hope of gaining more for Ireland by submission than by resistance. He apparently gave his allegiance to England in good faith, but the treatment which the Irish received from James I provoked him into some indignant utterances, which rendered him an object of suspicion to the English government, and he finally fled to the continent, and died blind and broken-hearted in Rome in the year 1616.

TYRONE

OLD, blind and helpless, like a fallen stone
Amid these Roman stones I lie. Each
block

Of marble hath a history. And I—
I, too, am but a marred and broken rock,
Down tumbled by the pitiless great storms
Of my tempestuous past—the storms that
rushed

From sea to sea, o'er Erin's prostrate land.
Half sunken in the grave am I, as they,
In sand, these stony statues of old men;
But I—unlike to them—I bear a heart
That aches.

URSULA

Come to the open lattice, love,
And feel the sun.

TYRONE

It tells me that the year
Hath rolled around and brought again the day
Commemorating still the one when I
Did lay my hope, my life, and Ireland's chance
Low down before an English soldier's feet;
But Mountjoy smiled in scorn e'en as I knelt,
And then I knew my kneeling was in vain.
Not such was Essex, when we met that morn

Beside the ford. The sun shone bright. My
heart
Went out to Essex as we talked. My faith
Was strong in Essex—good and kind was he.
How could she let him die, that fickle queen?
But Mountjoy jeered that day above my head!

URSULA
Forget the day, O'Neil.

TYRONE
I shall more soon
Forget my God.

URSULA
You make me weep, O'Neil.

TYRONE
O sweetest English rose, O English wife,
When hast thou wept at words of mine before?
Yet surely thou hadst cause to weep.

URSULA
And cause
To love, O'Neil.

TYRONE
Now tell me, dear, art thou
As fair as in the days when I could see?

URSULA

I think not, since, O'Neil, upon the street
The people do not turn and look on me
As once they did.

TYRONE

And doth it grieve thy heart?

URSULA

Not much, my lord.

TYRONE

I would it did, my wife.
One tiny flaw of vanity in this,
The crystal of thy soul, would seem to me
To justify—in part—my youthful pride,
The rash presumption of my love when I
Did deem myself a fitting mate for thee.

URSULA

It gladdens me to hear you jest, O'Neil.

TYRONE

What, art thou ever glad with me, my girl?
For England was thy country, dearest love,
As Ireland mine. And England's sword was
turned

Against my country's breast. I could not
choose
But try to beat it back.

URSULA
I knew that, dear,
In that wild morning hour I married you.

TYRONE
Oh sweetest, maddest hour that ever dawned.

URSULA
From madness sometimes groweth peace,
O'Neil.

TYRONE
And blessed patience, like, my wife, to thine;
Yet tell me something now, for, ere I die—

URSULA
Nay, do not talk of death.

TYRONE
Yes, tell me now
Before I die, one thing I have not known.
Thy brother's name hath ne'er been breathed
by us
Since on my soldiers' spears he fell and died.

URSULA

I never breathe his name except in prayer.

TYRONE

Hast thou remarked the silence 'twixt us
twain?

URSULA

I have the silence felt, O'Neil.

TYRONE

A mist
Has crept between us, slow enfolding us.
And was it dark for thee within the mist?

URSULA

Thou stoodst there with me, dear.

TYRONE

O sweetest heart,
O truest, tenderest heart of woman kind!
Now, look you, wife, these eyes of mine are
blank,
But in my soul are other eyes which yearn,
With something deeper than a lover's pain,
Within one hidden chamber in your heart
To see.

URSULA

It shall be open to your wish.

TYRONE

Didst thou not love thy knightly brother then,
Although he would have crossed thy young
desires? [A Pause]

URSULA

He was so much my elder, that he bore
Me in his arms, when I was but a child,
Beside the English streams. I love him still.

TYRONE

Ah me!

URSULA

It is a woman's fate to choose
Between her loves. I made my choice, my
lord.

TYRONE

A rueful need of choice to thee. Close grew
The thorns on either path and flaming red
The blossoms were with blood. 'Tis passing
strange;
This hour my spirit seems released so far
From thine, that I can pity thee, in truth,
As if thou wert another—not my wife.

[10]

And so I must, I think, have given back
Some comfort—yes, I truly hope I did;
I walked, a blessèd woman, by thy side,
Rejoicing that the blessing came from thee,
Since thou hadst led me where so many loved.

TYRONE

We were so close through all those changing
years
I could not look on thee till now. For me
Thou didst renounce thy girlish home, thy kin,
And all that love wherein thy stainless bud
Of life, as in a garden, grew until
It ripened to the faultless flower.

URSULA

That flower,
O'Neil, was thine.

TYRONE

O hapless English wife
Of England's direst foe!

URSULA

Thou art the foe,
My Irish lord, of England's darkest crimes,
And what thou art, am I.

TYRONE

Ah, God to me
Hath given the only perfect thing that grew
On England's soil.

URSULA

'Tis sweet to hear your words,
O'Neil, but they do praise me more, far more
Than I deserve.

TYRONE

My dear, thou art my hope,
My only source of faith.

URSULA

Oh, no, the church
Doth bless thee, love, besides.

TYRONE

In all this world,
This world where I have fought and failed,
I rest alone
On thee.

URSULA

Nay, let me call the priest, O'Neil.

TYRONE

It shall be as thou wilt. The priest may come.

URSULA

It frightens me to see your face, O'Neil.

TYRONE

Fear naught, for here in ancient Rome the
church

Shall shelter thee; and our young son shall
grow

In grace and stature, after I am gone,
Though English soldiers burn and plunder
still

In Erin's land.

URSULA

O brave and broken heart!

My husband! Ah, speak yet again! O'Neil!
O'Neil! I think I never yet have told you
half

How much I love—

TYRONE

Here endeth all but love;

The long endeavor and the baffled flight—

The rising hope—the charging on again—

The cheated faith—the dull despair of
God—

The sullen effort in contempt of Fate—

The joy of battle and the pain of loss—

The disappointment drinking steadily
Like thirst, through dragging years, my drop-
ping blood;
All, all is ended now save love;—O wife,
My Ursula, in heaven I hope to see—
Once more—thy face!

[*Dies*]

THE HERO

PRESTON S. BROOKS, OR THE
COWARD,

TO
A CONFIDENTIAL FRIEND

JANUARY, 1857

THE women kissed me, and their odorous
breath,

The pressure of their white, bare arms around
My neck, the murmur of their soft applause,
The gay, triumphant laughter of the men
Who greeted me, when home I went to try
My cause before our Southern gentlemen—
All bore me on a billowed sea of glory;
I did not care that Burlingame had gone
To meet me there in Canada;—I laughed
Within my sleeve, that I had fooled him so,
And sent him on such bootless errand.

But

I've wondered lately how the story'll read
In history. Damn the future critics. That
Is what I say. No future world of men
Can understand our Southern cause.

Well, yes,

I do confess I'm just a trifle sick,
At last, of seeing canes and getting gifts

Of golden-headed sticks;—and silver coins
In number thirty, came from Yankee girls.
Blasphem'ous females! They were girls who
work

In cotton mills beside the sea; and lost,
Of course, is all their maiden bloom and sense
Of fitness and religion.

No, I think
'Tis said that he has never breathed a word
Of me resentful. Hypocrite, he is,
Though Mrs. Child considers him a saint.
He must detest me though he is a prig!

He lay a fallen column on the floor,
I stood above—how other could I stand?
I should have shot him, had he risen up,
To struggle—yes, I meant to do the job
That I had undertaken, and to shoot,
If so I must. But, stunned at once, he fell;
I saw the beauty of his curling hair,
E'en while the blood flowed through it, and
I struck!

I wish I had not struck those final blows;
But I was in a rage that seemed divine,
A great Olympic madness in my veins;—
It moved my arm. I don't repent; Oh, no!

But wish I had gone daring Northern wrath,
And met that Burlingame and fought it out
With him, though dead I lay, in consequence,
This hour beside the bawling cataract.
I think 'twere comfort now, to be—just dead.
But I am young and strong, and I shall live
Yet twoscore years, at least, to play a part
In shaping governmental form for this,
Our Union, or its Southern half.

'Tis said

Today, that Sumner'll live. Do you suppose
He'll dare to come to Washington again?
I don't believe he will. I think that I
Have done so much. I've silenced him, and
all
His fellow Abolition Yankees.

Ugh,

I have the queerest feeling in my throat;
I'll talk with you another time, but now
I'll go and try to sleep.

[*Later*]

I think that ne'er

Again I'll sleep—alive—upon this earth!
It hurts! I am too young to suffer so!

[21]

Loose, loose the collar! There's a vision
haunteth me;

I see Charles Sumner standing by a grave,
I see the name upon the stone. It's mine!
Ah, God have mercy, it is mine! I hear—
Keep hearing Sumner say, "Poor fellow!"
That!

It maddens me. I wish that Sumner would
Be silent by my grave. I hate his voice;
I've heard it in my dreams and when awake;
I could not go beyond the hearing it!
I choke! Good-by. Let Sumner live or die,
Or suffer through the years to come, and howl
Unto the world;—if, only, never more
I hear his voice, I am content.

Go call
My mother now, that she may see me die,
And whisper "Darling" in my ear, and stop
The noise of Sumner's groaning there.

THE HERO

A MAN unlettered, but the Sages
Knew him, on the Concord plain,
As looked they from the hermitages
Gray and stained by Nature's rain;

A man uncultured, but the Lady
Knew him, nor beheld in vain,
Who bore him solace from the shady
Lawns beside the tidal main;

A man of mystery, but the People
Knew he did not life disdain
Who for others laid it down.

So soldiers marching past the steeple
Cheering, sought the Battle Plain,
Cheering, singing, "Old John Brown."

OLIVER BROWN'S WIDOW

SAD little Martha sat and sewed,
She did not tremble—only once she
cried—
Her baby born and dead, two teardrops
flowed,
Then Martha did the thing she could—
she died.

LUCIFER THE FALLEN

IN all ages and all climes
Destiny repeateth crimes;
Fallen Lucifer again
Roamed the awful battle plain,
Where the slavers' rebel blade
Nation building work essayed
O'er that quivering "corner stone"
That was made of flesh and bone,
Made of ravished human soul,
From itself which slavers stole;
Fallen Lucifer was fain,
Seeking still his end to gain
On the beast conceivèd plan,
That to clod, degradeth Man.

NORTHERN MAIDENS

THROUGH the fading decades five
Have the spinsters stayed alive,
Since the Fortress Sumter fell
Under Charleston's rebel shell.
Decades five the black-robed Priest,
Walking South and West and East,
Never hath a bridegroom found
Lay not stiffened under ground.

Sat the spinsters fair and young,
Each with silent lips and tongue;
Sat the spinsters gray and old,
And they never mortal told
That they always heard a wail,
Sounding on the midnight gale,
Crying, "Love, I still would come
But my limbs are cold and numb,
So I send to you my ghost
From the grave strewn Southern coast."

MARY McGUINNESS

SHE was just an Irish lass
With old Erin's honest eyes,
But the rank Virginian grass
Groweth where her husband lies.

Hither over rolling sea
Came she, doomed to break her heart
When the Bull Run musketry
Did its mad rebelling part.

Alien offering, to atone
For our country's deadly sin,
Laid she on the altar stone,
Just a widow's weed to win.

Fain I would her veil of crape
With a shamrock garland bind,
Fain our banner round her drape,
Lit with stars and level lined.

FROM AGE TO AGE

FROM age to age, the form tyrannic
And method suffer Ariel's mystic change,
Sea-dipped in Time's vast cavern where
the strange

Deep tides are more than Oceanic,

But changes not the germ organic
Of master impulse that would life arrange
To crush the weaker, drive it till it cringe
Before or king or proud mechanic!

Beware my Country, lest despotic graft
Grow alien—yet deep bedded on our tree,
An Upas foliage—not of Liberty,

Till faith shall sicken, and our Nation daft,
Reel, as the poet sang, both back and East,
Where Man is tyrant or a minion Beast.

AH, CAN IT BE?

I

AH, can it be of this vast Universe
The primal secret,—that e'en Eden's
curse,

And cause thereof, man's error that provoked,
Were both, of Ignorance, (creative cloaked),

Which tried to do a task too difficult,
The fell and unexpected sad result?
So sits today a God, in yonder bourne,
Who doth His helplessness remorseful mourn?

Then pity us, Thou God, and take our pity,
If came the dooming Sorrow on us so,
Wail Thou in Solo to our Chorus ditty,

Wail, wail the pain above, and that below,
The anguish born to die in Earthly City
And pass to meteors where the comets glow.

II

There Calvin by Servetus rideth grim,
And with a torch he lights the sunset sky;
"Nay, light it not," the God doth strangely
cry;
"I meant no sin," saith Calvin unto Him.

"Mine was," pleads Torquemada, "conscience
whim;"
"And mine mistake," Las Casas breatheth
sigh;
"Ours dogma was," vow they who did
deny
The spirit's right to own its body's limb.

"When God," cry all, "created gulfs of pain,
And sentient creatures down its caverns thrust;
We thought the base of gulf was pavement
just."

"Nay, nay," the God declares, "'tis quicksand
vain;
Creation is a car;—with Me hold fast
The reins, and help Me drive the quicksands
past."

BEN BUTLER

THE dusky regiment rushed, storming up
Newmarket Hill, as Butler gave com-
mand,
And though the rebel guns their bullets hurled
To meet them, firm they clutched their bay-
onets,
Up climbing, while Ben Butler, watching,
stood
Upon a summit near, intent to see
If negro soldiers could, as much he hoped,
Endure such scathing fire, and forward go,
And mount the hill unto the belching guns,
And smite the slaver hands from off those
guns,
Or would they crouch or run in paltry awe
Of white men. So Ben Butler watched; for
then
The nation reeled, both North and South,
with pride
That scorned the negro, doubting were he
man,
Like other men to do and dare; nor yet,
In open battle, had his nerve been tried,
There, on Virginian soil, where he had been
A chattel sold.

Up, up the negroes marched,
As sure they were no longer contraband—
Grim warfare's unresisting spoil—mere
things—
The shuttlecocks, thrown back and forth
again,
'Twixt armies and the auction block;
Now they were men, who sought the rebel
horde,
To test each soldier there in single strife,
And strike him dead for right to rear a child,
And own a wife, and lay a hearthstone smooth
Beneath a sheltering roof. Black men, at last,
Were they, to strike their rebel masters dead,
And dare the threatened gallows tree.

On, up
They strode, a phalanx armed and strangely
grim,
Avengers of a fearful wrong and woe,
Distorted images of Judgment Day.

But silence brooded all the fortress o'er,
When vaulted into it the remnant left
Of that dark troop, and high their banner
held
Like torch, above the ramparts and the
sword;

For, just a moment, ere they, shrieking, came,
The rebels saw their eyeballs gleaming fierce
From out of faces dark, and fled in fright,
Too madly frantic for escape to be
Ashamed to run from minions.

So they took

The fort, those negroes, sudden proved as
men.

But far below the captured walls, the way
Was strewn with bodies gashed and corpses
stiff,
In none of which had dwelt a spirit craven.

Then Butler, mounted on his war horse, rode
That fearful path, and reverent turned his
steps

Amid the wounded and the dead, and saw
How blood as red as Saxon vintage flowed
From gaping, blackened flesh; whereat his
soul,

Like to a giant, rose in righteous wrath,
And swore he to his God a righteous oath:
"I will befriend and cherish all my life
The race to which these men belong."

Black, black,
The ghosts around him smiled to hear that
oath,
Exultant smiled, before they skyward sped,
A cloud of blackened witnesses, to find
Beyond the sun a country and a home.

Long years had passed when Butler wrote,
"That vow
I have, forever faithful, kept."

Then down,
Through azure, sounded trumpets golden-
toned,
And on the blast a voice came breathing,
"Hark,
Thou, first of all our Generals to proclaim
Decree that wives of negro fugitives
Should succor have,—thou, first to find us
way
To freedom, Harken now to us and look,
Thy soldiers offer unto thee, this hour,
A great salute."

IN ARCADY



MEMORY

THERE is a tufted bloom
Too pallid to illumine
The fields in Spring,
When mating warblers sing ;

That bloom is brownish pale,
Its stem is soft and frail,
It is not fair ;
You would not for it care ;

And yet that flower
Hath over memory power,
And brings a tear
Her drooping eyelids near,
When warblers sing
And wake her up in Spring.

THE JUBILANT WIND

MAN'S spirit assaulteth the skies—
But what is his triumph to me,
Fierce rushing whence Tempests arise
The soul of the Organ to be?

Man conquers his brother in fields—
But what is his glory to mine
Who master the cadence which yields
The music of breathing divine?

MAN EXULTANT

THE lightning obeyeth my hand—
The sunlight hath pencil of Titian
forgot
And painteth as I ——— command,
The wind is my piper, and knoweth it
not.

I

'TIS odd, how near that little god,
 Sweet Cupid, comes to doing
 Himself the wooing;
 As though, in way that maidens know,
 He thought a laddie couldn't,
 Or wisely wouldn't;
 And so, he toots and shoots,
 Then low, salutes, and scoots.

II

LET Clara wear the gem marine, which
 gloweth green,
 With pearled translucent sheen
 Not quite as that in moonstone seen;

The spirit she of cascade foam, a lady gnome,
 Who doth like Undine roam
 Beneath an alien vapor dome;

And bears she ever on where'er she goes
 A wave-born captured swan,
 While sings she all alone, and carries rose
 White carved of coral stone.

III

STILL my fancy sees him go,
A figure lithe, swinging scythe,
Irish Pompey mowing meadows swampy;
But in faith, I do not know
Another thing I can sing
Of old Pompey, save that long ago,
He became a phantom fay, Erin's elf astray
Where pond lilies sway
When the mill bells ring
Near the Blackstone's flow—
Weird old Pompey, tall and blithe
In the meadows swampy.

IV

'TWAS queer, so many babies are there
born down here,
That I should have the sweetest one did ever
cry,
Or bawl, and tumble flat when trying not to
crawl,
Or suck its little thumb and look like sleepy
Puck,
But so, it happened that I had it, as you know.





V

ONCE there was a little fairy,
And her petticoat was blue,
Made of gossamers were airy,
So 'twas warm and rather lovely too!

Lived she in a mushroom dwelling,
With a rabbit chaperon,
But her spirit felt rebelling
When that rabbit ate her mush alone;

Therefore ran she on the roadway,
Holding up her petticoat,
While a guiding squirrel showed way
To the land where women vote;

But the sunshine made her dizzy
And she tumbled down to sleep,
Where was Master Merlin busy
Weaving nets the dragon flies to keep;

Then the gray old Wizard Merlin
Touched her forehead with his hand,
Smoothing back the tresses curling
Golden, under bluest ribbon band;

Long she lay beneath a hickory,
And, when up that fairy woke,
She had turned to blossom chicory—
And she was so blue she never spoke,

Never made the smallest murmur,
Only when the breezes blew
Grasped her stalk with twiglets firmer,
While she bluer blue, in silence, grew.

VI

I THINK it is a doom outrageous
That we must sleep away
One third of every rarely precious
And love-inspiring day;

Though Shakespeare rhapsodize of slumber
In his enchanting rhyme,
I wish he might awake have written
Through all his breathing time.

I'm willing both to eat and labor,
Keep shop or house or sheep,
But execrate the law of nature
Condemning me to sleep;

When I'm awake I'm really living,
I talk or sob or laugh,
But sleeping is an occupation
Fit only for a calf.



THREE CITIES

I

THERE are some stories rise like kingly
ghosts,
And say, "What! did you think us dead
and gone?"

Tho' shroud on shroud be round about us
drawn
We walk, grim sentinels at outer posts,

"And cannot merge our action with the hosts,
Who hail the glowing Paradisal dawn,
Until to beings still this planet on
Be told the awe of life that made us ghosts,

"The secret awe of God, of love, of sin,
Whate'er it was that pierced through all the
thin
Earth-woven fabrics of our mortal life,

"And sent us silent forth unto the Shore
That stretches desert-like and wide before
The Gate that shelters harmony from strife."

II

O H, empty, save of phantoms, is the street
In cities three, where wraiths with gob-
lins meet,
Nor tell each other how the Angels greet,
While Silence rushes like the wind-blown
sleet;

Through cities three, there passes empty road;
It empty were, though thither legions strode,
And silent were, though blare of trumpets
flowed;
And fallen on this earth is mine abode!

It lieth ruined by the Beacon hill,
Nor build it architects of Paris will,
And by the Bay that house is roofless still
Above the graves which all its courtyards fill.

Ah, is there City with pearled fortresses
Where Angels can defy Eumenides?

III

HILLED Providence, that crowns the
tidal Bay,

Thou City of the mingled rivers three
That bear the toilers' harvest to the sea,
Still wild and sweet thy palace bells convey
The message of the dead and gone to me,
The dead who filled thy halls with mirth
and glee;

There is no amber bloom of asphodel

Upon thy banks,

That yieldeth such perfume as tale I tell

Upon thy banks,

While ocean's mournful boom is sounding
knell

Upon thy banks.

IV

O PARIS, City thou of mad unrest,
I never have unto the world confessed
How many sacred secrets mine lie pressed
And hidden close beneath thy marble breast;

My echo song hath never breathed refrain
Of one sad moan beside the river Seine,
A moan that sobbeth forth the mortal pain
That since Creation solace seeks in vain;

Oh Paris, still I hear a laughter low
In one bright spot where lamps of evening
glow;—
Yet round a fading joy doth laughter flow;

Where mimes of Danton and of Robespierre
grope,
And mock parading of our modern hope,
Upon thy pavement cast I heliotrope.

PURPLE ASTERS

I

I HAVE a friend, beyond the solar ray,
To whom, I, pulsing reverent, send away
My tender love and gratitude today,
As bodied spirit to unbodied may;

“When you and I,” he wrote me once, “a
cloud

Shall sit upon, calm-eyed and level-browed
We shall behold the mysteries unavowed
By destiny unto the earthly crowd;”

To him I turned, in hour of deep despair,
In that unconscious way is well aware
So thinketh not, “This friend is sure to care;”

He stood beside my dying brother’s bed,
His guidance to my marriage altar led—
His breath was blessing o’er my baby’s head.

II

“Be sure,” he wrote me once, “you roam
about,
Through Alpine passes wander in and out,
And linger long where mountains, frozen old,
With silver summits pierce the molten gold;”

“Be sure,” he wrote me once, “you note the
light
On Alfieri’s tombstone falleth white;
And mark the antique grandeur of the way
Still Milo’s Venus standeth in our day.”

“I never saw, before, a bobolink
So near,” he said, “to ocean’s crested brink;
Now think you could a bird yon sea foam
drink?”

“But you, can singing, sip the clover dew
In pastures wide, from whence that warbler
flew,
And wildest meaning of the wind construe.”

III

“Once came succession,” said he, “of sweet
days

To me, when all the while my spirit, sheathed
In tranquil blessedness, unspeaking, breathed
Thanksgiving to the Lord for all His ways;

“I murmured in reiterated phrase,
‘O God, I thank Thee that while floods have
seethed

The tree of life for me is olive wreathed;’ ”
Thus spoke my friend with reminiscent gaze;

And I, in silence listening, wondered *when*,
While civic passions stormed around him wild,
His soul had echoed psalm the Shepherd sang;

Oh, is he blessèd now, as felt he then?
I only know, that down on me he smiled
Where far-off fog bells over ocean rang.

IV

His youth had struggled with the elements
Which rush along the lightning caverned
sky
And foam the madness of Niagara by,
And split the surface of the continents.

Bold, had he challenged purpose of events
Where peoples dash their force at law, and
try
How will the Golden Rule of Christ apply
When despots move their mailed armaments;

No soldier had he been of holiday,
And though he once misread an order's
text,
And to a fog-like wraith responded "yea,"

Pure as its restless flood, his Titan Soul
Was mystic as the sea by storm perplexed,
And fathomless as ocean's baseless bowl.

V

Desire to help—that was the passion
Among his varied many, strongest;
Ambition rose and sank, but longest
It moved in self-renouncing fashion;

When other wish, with embers ashen,
As righteous or as tired, he covered,
His hand, so kingly sworn, still hovered
O'er fragile creatures with compassion.

Ah, low I whisper, here, a mound beside,
“Sad asters, sign of mourning and of pride
And faith that can in field of loss abide,

“Calm asters, blooming where the woodbines
creep

When over Island rocks the breakers leap,
Be purple pall above my friend asleep.”

VI

A "Silver Saint," one called him in his days
Were later; and this name it ringeth true
To chord within my heart, and doth renew
A cadence there of thankfulness and praise,

A soft Amen to anthem that conveys
Deep joy—yet prayer withal that fain
would sue
Might something added be the faith unto'
Which doth that Amen on my rhythm raise;

Amid the haloed and angelic band,
A Silver Saint, thus let him bear in hand

And show to gods our Autumn's astral bloom
As mourns it, regal, over Summer's tomb;

It is the flower, in Sorrow's vintage stained,
Proclaiming so a battle lost—yet gained.

VII

Now sit I gazing through the window glass
That barreth out the North wind's rude
harass,

And seem to see his face on clouds that pass,
As drawn by Titian's brush upon the mass;

As from such cloud, descended to the mold,
With dark hair blanched, once came he, white
and old;

"Now eighty years," he said, "my life en-
fold;"

Then Silence like a mist around him rolled;

And I, who, in the long departed years,
Had roamed, a child, beside his manhood's
track,

Then stood an imaged form of mystery black,

And, putting by, to gaze at him through tears,
A veil as sable as the midnight's drift,
Slow murmured, "Where I go I take your
gift."

VIII

I sometimes think there must be shapeless
void

In some far space, where dwell the foggy
ghosts

Of all the pallid, palpitating hosts
Of days that died unborn yet undestroyed;

There float they, random, vague and un-
employed—

Thin sheeted films of being. On the coasts
Of Nothingness, they gibber empty boasts
Of deeds undone and triumphs unenjoyed;

And we who walk the solid earth below,
(Or is it close beside?) that realm, wind-
blown,

Where helpless moans aborted potency,

Can only half imagine all the glow
Of great achievements might have been our
own

Had but those days had vital energy.

IX

Yet can there be beyond the starlight blur,
Not endless void, where doth oblivion glut
Oblivion, with our perished chances, but
A more than wizard God who cannot err,

And re-creates occasions past, which were
Else lost, in prisoning Chaos ever shut,
And makes them crystallize, as jewels cut
To glorify the sword Excalibur.

If so, one moment lost, I claim as mine,
When it shall gleam as amulet renewed,
And all its chances like to gems I link

Upon a golden thread, and close entwine
The aster blossoms, starry, purple-hued,
Which to my friend, I fling across the brink.

WENDELL PHILLIPS,
THE
HERMES



Wendell Phillips

I

ON high Olympus poised, spoke solemnly
White Hermes, "Christ hath risen from
the earth

Where dwell the men of miserable birth,
And as He rose he beckoned unto me;

"Then plain I did His face and gesture see
Where stood I, with the infant god of
mirth,
Who babbled playful murmurs at the
dearth
Of harvest grapes upon black Calvary;

"But when, Great Jove, I saw the Christ,
I felt
A tender yearning for the little ones
Ungodlike and unjoyous, He had left;

"Down at the feet of Christ, I, listening,
knelt,
He spoke;—then passed beyond the stars
and suns;—
I bear His message to a world bereft."

II

The corrugated brow of mighty Jove
Grew closer grooved and blacker o'er his
eyes,
Where lightning seemed from forges to
arise
Whose onward bolts Vulcanic hammers drove;

Spoke he;—his voice the frightened ether
clove
In cloudy fragments, tinct with sulphur
dyes,
Back rushing from that sound in groaning
sighs,
To flood with pain the twilit Delphic grove;

Said Jove, "If thou shalt bear the Christian
word
To those vile creatures whom I madly made,
I doom thee, as I doomed Prometheus erst."

Up Hermes sang his answer, like a chord
Ascending from the sunlight's downward
glade,
"I do Christ's bidding, though by thee
accursed."

III

Great Pan arose, as earthward Hermes sped,
And asked, "Who cometh now from cloudy
fleece,
For I can bear no more, who never cease
To feel the throbbing dew on Calvary shed?"

From laurel thickets Daphne raised her head,
Soft moaning, "Canst thou any Art release,
From passion's impulse that is but caprice,
Whose tumult worketh only final dread?"

The Troll amid the rocks of Stonehenge cried,
"Dark vapor cold bedews my forehead damp,
The soul within hath labor-wearied died;"

Sang Hermes, "Hear the message that I
speak;
The Christ commands His angels forth from
camp
To battle for the helpless and the weak."

IV

“ ’Tis safe to leave to every man the rights
God gave him, and his labor’s fullest due,
Though he be white or bearing other hue;
And that it shall be thus, our country plights;

“Nor must we ever let our love for sights
Are beautiful, for sounds accorded to
The rule of music, nor permit the dew
Of genial air, whose touch the flesh delights,

“To melt from out our soul and from our
sense
Of justice, higher than benevolence,
The conscious aching for another’s need.”

So from his youth to age, great Phillips gave
His counsel—so he lived, and so he clave
With heart and hand unto the Christian creed.

V

He strode the steamer deck beneath the sweep
Of one proud banner flaunting o'er the deep,
And passion to its stars made wingèd leap;
"I will with you," he said, "a vigil keep;

"Since, Douglass, men deny you roof and
 berth,
May God make desolate my home and hearth
And mark my brow with sign of basest worth,
As I were Cain who roamed again the earth,

"If I lay down this auburn head of mine
Upon a pillow that too white is deemed
To touch the curls that crown your dusky
 brow."

He watched all night with Douglass, while
 the brine
Behind the ship through phosphorescence
 gleamed
And to the planets signaled clear his vow.

VI

He walked beside the woman of the street,
And reaching gentlest hand, low whispered
"Come;"

Then led her to the sheltering, refuge home
Where might her soul with Peace and Mercy
meet;

He stood before the legal judgment seat,
And for the convict made a brother's claim,
"Ah, help him out of sin and past its shame,
For Justice would convert, not harsh entreat."

Thus, while he lived, there was a man who
cared
If well or ill the throbbing millions fared,
He broke his heart to use for service bread;

He filled the Altar cup with his own wine—
The vintage flow from forth his love be-
nign;—
But mourn ye, Nations, now, for Phillips
dead!

VII

The Russian exile sighed, "His voice, alone
From forth unsympathizing crowds, came
blown,
With tender comprehension in its tone,
To prison cells where fetters clamped me
prone."

Sad Ireland's peasant called, "Ah come to
me,
Thou, Western peer of high Democracy,
Thou, Scion of great England's Chivalry,
And bid thy English kinsmen set me free."

The Bright-eyed Indian woman cried, "My
heart
Is hopeful, knowing he will take my part."

Alaska's children plead beneath his roof,
But, proud, the negro held himself; aloof,
Enforcèd alien in his native land,
And said, "He bade me sit at his right hand."

VIII

Amid the crowding throng, almost alone,
Life long, stood Phillips—as, some day at
noon,
In mart, before both merchant and buffoon,
The Future's Ghost should mount the ros-
trum throne—

Its portent face, illuminated shown,
By light was yet to be of coming moon,
Slow moving over Chaos' vast lagoon,
O'er which not yet the auguring wing had
flown;

Then cried the leaders to the startled mob,
“Why hearken ye to words of ghostly wrath?
What though a phantom lurk along your
path?”

Down Phillips crushed a stifled human sob,
And spoke his awful sentence, “Quick repent;
Cast ashes on your head and God content.”

IX

Bright was his aspect in his early years,
And as he older grew, it scarcely paled;
He still resembled one who had inhaled
The vivifying air of heavenly spheres,

Then breathed it unto men were not his peers
In god-like birth, nor had with "splendor
trailed"

Around them, winged on sunbeams, down-
ward sailed

For incarnation into chevaliers;

A shape of color, auburn haired and eyed
Like bluets steeped in melted pearls—his face
As that of Hermes changed by hearing dirge

That Christian lips were chanting at his side,
So Phillips looked when with a haughty grace
He did from city crowds to sight emerge.

X

“For thirty years,” said Phillips, “rode I
 race,
For thirty years, I waged a desert strife—
 What think you are the pathways now in
 life
Where foot of mine would, shod in velvet,
 pace?”

“The Beacon hill, I know from top to base,
 And I could summon herald drum and fife
 To dash their music 'gainst the hisses rife,
And be my conduct to the Ruler's place;

“And once perhaps I should have liked to
 tread
 That Beacon path on high, but, long ago,
In soul of mine, lay down Ambition dead—

“For my belov'd, whom I had loved to please,
 These many years have lain 'neath grasses
 low;
Nor more doth hiss at me their spirits tease.”

XI

He looked maid Science sternly in the face,
And said, "Thou daughter only art of God
When thou dost soften, for the feet un-
shod,
The flinty pavements of the market place;"

He laid his royal touch on hands that trace
The lines of Art and rhythmic period,
And said, "Now render thought of Him
who trod
The pathway to the sacrificial place;

"Though Carlyle sourly grimace as a Sage,
With Darwin cry, 'The Battle to the Strong,'
Though Scholars in Republics, aping, mock

"The manners of the Despot's minion flock,
The Sermon on the Mount hath cadence long,
And bids you serve the Weakness of your
Age."

XII

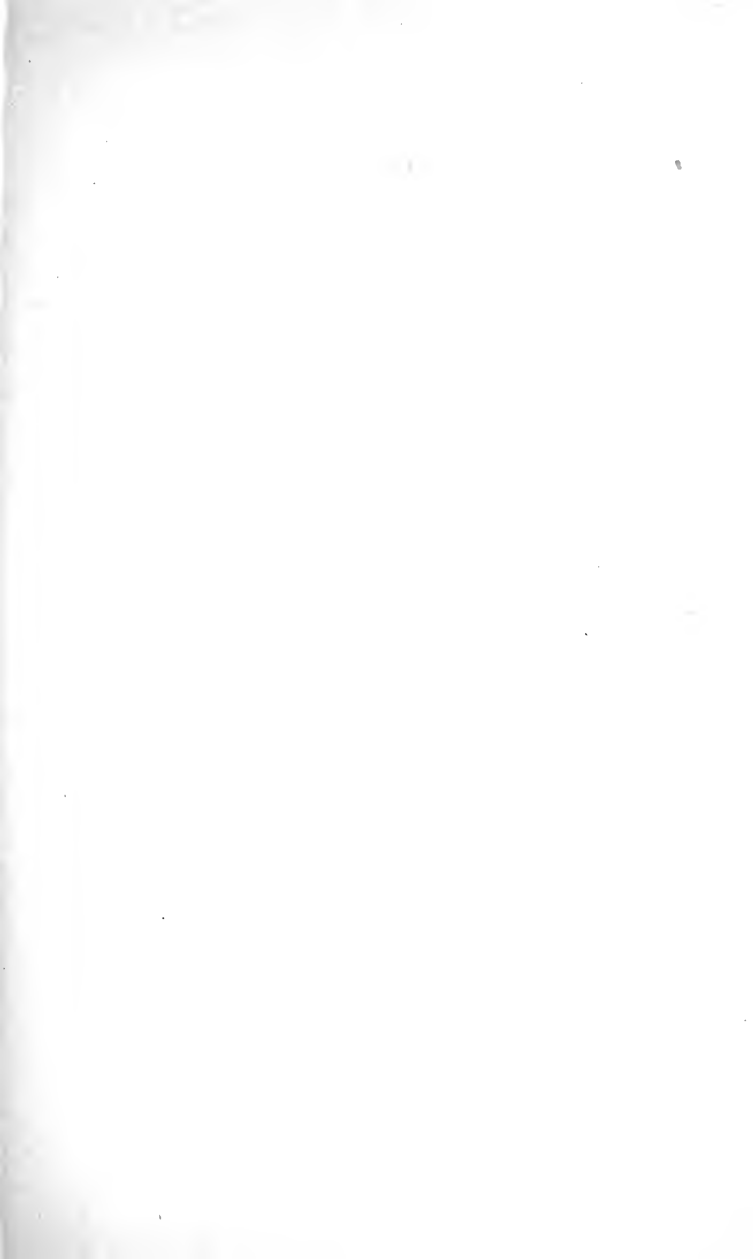
I wonder, if upon his palm, he wore
The sign that Francis of Assisi bore,
Bestowed in that great hour of rapture, when
The Saint of Service stood apart from men;

For never on this earth hath mortal dwelt,
Since in Italian vales Saint Francis knelt,
More worthy through self-sacrifice to know
Stigmata's consecrating ruby glow,

Than he, who vowed, the stones of Boston's
pave
He would too holy make to bear a slave;

Than he, who to its children, smiling gave,
The largesse of his unasked bounty gave;

Than he, who, old and weary, would not rest
While not, by ease, were aching millions blest.





Ann Phillips

XIII

He took upon himself in age a load
Of newer social scorn for effort new,
And Midas from the hand of Jove withdrew
A thunder bolt fire-sharpened to a goad,

And hurled it where the gray-haired champion
strode,
And thus a baleful lighting round him
threw,
As forth he went his Master's task to do
Amid the laden workers on the road;

Cried Midas, "I would statue build of gold
For you, and crown it with a laurel wreath,
If you would silent be now you are old;"

Said Phillips, "I will sooner God deny
As holy, than be silent underneath
His Heaven, when I hear a pauper's cry."

XIV

The doctor spoke the sentence was of death;
“There is for you no chance,” he sadly
said;
Adown then Phillips laid his royal head,
And “Ann, Ann,” whispered he with failing
breath;

But then he smiled, as having made his graith
For crusade long, when close beside his bed
As though she heard his Doom’s approach-
ing tread,
Begged one who loved him, “Tell me of your
faith!”

“In Christ as Son Divine, I have believed,”
He said, “In Him I see all problems solved;—
Round Him have Ages satellite revolved;

“He taught to me endurance when I grieved,
'Twas He who nerved my struggling toil for
man;”
Thus Phillips dying spoke—then murmured
“Ann.”

XV

The Negro stood, a figure black and gaunt;
And there, rag-clothen 'mid the Boston
throng,

He imaged fearfully the crime which long
Had crushed a race with weight of adamant;

Yet, from his lips, dumb wishes seemed to
pant,

As his was soul birth-strangled in a thong,

Then quickened unto sense by stabbing
prong

Till of itself not wholly ignorant;

A Celtic woman at the Negro stared,
Compassion, sympathy out-streaming from
Her Irish eyes which glistened through a
tear;

"Would you," she whispered, "look on him
who dared

Both life and death for you? Then with me
come,

And let us mourn together at his bier."

THE MINSTREL AND HELEN

A DUET

Wherein the voice only of The Minstrel is heard.

SCENE: by the Seekonk River. TIME: the middle
of the Nineteenth Century.

TO me those young and white-stemmed
birches,
Though clad they are in green,
Bring ever thought of brides in churches,
Their maids and grooms between.

Yes, like this brooklet is the Yarrow,—
You could a pebble toss
From bank to bank,—for 'tis as narrow
As Seekonk here across;

Well, every poet full doth own it,
The visioned Yarrow stream,
As wide as ever he hath shown it—
Nor wholly as in dream;

That is the power to us is given—
And right, to Nature change;
It is the will of gracious Heaven
That poets rearrange!—

Oh, will you try to throw it over,
This Indian arrow stone,
And hit that tuft of russet clover
The farther bank upon?

Why should a blossom, dead, stay standing
Beside the golden rod,
Which empress Ceres holds commanding
When she is harvest god?

The golden rod is Autumn's scepter,
The sickle is but tool
For use of harvester, adept
When working under rule;

Yet harvester hath thought of blessing,
And of the household good,
And Ceres bountiful confessing
Madonna's Motherhood!

Now whisper—when hath come November,
Shall we together kneel
One hearthstone by, and rake the ember
While bells Thanksgiving peal?

You say your friends your great surrender
In wedlock still oppose?
Oh Lady, are you then befriender
Of my determined foes?

Ah, now you cling—above me stooping,—
You swaying woman vine,
Your blossomed being o'er me drooping,—
Like lovely columbine!

My love for you were not diviner
Were I unbodied ghost;
It moveth unto issues finer
Than knows the gossip host;

Perhaps 'twere well though were I specter,
On moonbeams fain to glide,
And sip the drops of odorous nectar
Down honeysuckles slide,

And then to rise and join the legion
Of sprites, in garments white,
Who animate the mystic region
Where glows Astarte's light.

But still to live on earth would please me
When sky above is blue,—
And Autumn's brownish tintings ease me
As strains of music do;—

Ah, Helen, I adore you simply,
And only kisses crave
When both your cheeks are blushing dimply
Beneath your glances grave!

Yet, deep I know, my star was fatal
Though brilliantly it glowed;—
Its portents, on my morning natal,
Disaster darkly showed.

No, solemnly I swear it,—sinning
Is price not I would pay,
So be I knew, for any winning
In game of life we play.

My impulses are not Satanic
Like those through Adam came,—
But have the source that throbs galvanic,—
Unto an end the same!

Ah, let us cease our talk of forces
Which trouble bring or make,
And watch yon cricket as it courses
Where wind-blown asters quake.

Oh, that's a kingbird, he that twisteth
In nest a whitened thread;
Know you he follows as he listeth
The black crow overhead?

Know you the orioles he loveth,
And when their young ones fly,
Sir Kingbird every chance improveth
To perch those fledglings nigh?

In Autumn sit the kingbirds gravely
On fences in a row,
And stare they blankly and yet bravely
At Nature's fleeting show,

As failed within them aught aspiring
To rise and Southward fly,—
As breathed within a strong desiring
Here in the North to die.

Why, Helen, I have senses double,
For I was wizard made;—
You merely saw an iris bubble
Where sportive children played;

You saw the colors, three, prismatic,
Upon the globule glow,
And at the sight, you grew ecstatic
Of such a lovely show;

But I,—I also heard a warble,
As of a bobolink,
Ring softly from that airy bauble
Ere did it turfward sink.

Last eve I stood the sunset under,
My phantom raptured dumb,
And low I heard, in sound of wonder,
The moving darkness come!

Oh, I believe my soul was native,
 Though not my limbs were born
Where sang the Stars the joy Creative,
 When first was Eden's morn.

Yet, Helen, this you will discover,
 If not our fates diverge,
Creative Song unto your Lover
 Hath taken tone of dirge.

No, Helen, no!—that bird, black, glossy,
 That stalketh pompous so,
Among the lichens gray and mossy,
 I'm sure it is a crow!

But if it be a nightmare raven,—
 Belovèd, grant me then
The kiss that promises a haven
 To nightmare-haunted men!

Oh, dove-eyed darling, music choral
 I hear with perfect bliss,
Though not for you, a sound is oral
 In my permitted kiss!

Well, dearest, I have seen you never!
 I dream but of your face,
Imagine it Madonna's ever
 Behind your filmy lace;

I think, though, Botticelli's creatures
More softly outlined would,
When they are wildest, have your features,
If painted beings could!

But not they can, for rhythmic motion
And varied color hue,
At every sad or gleeful notion,
Keep making you anew.

You talk of form! Why, evanescent
Is all we name as form,
When color is in sunshine present
And changing shadows swarm.

Indeed, 'tis only mortals stolid
And those of silly mirth
Who think un sentient is and solid
This blossom-pregnant earth!

Why, color is alive, and steepeth,
As elf magician may,
The earth's weird senses till it sleepeth
Its summer hour away.

What? Did you never really fancy,
That, by some wizard spelled
Who knows all tricks of necromancy,
The earth is slumber held,

As from the Universal bases,
And wearing azure robe,
It goes patrolling starry spaces,
A trance-bewildered globe?

And did you wonder should it waken
Where polar magnets lure,
If frightened would it feel forsaken,
Or 'mid the Stars secure?

But if the earth be frightened yonder
Alone where planets are,
How would a woman feel, was fonder
Of Eden than of Star?

Ah think, among the Borealis,
She drifteth on alone
Who drank with me the wine-filled chalice
Wherein a pearl was thrown!

'Mid diamond spheroids of Orion
She jewels seeks in vain,
Who here on earth the dandelion
Once gathered glad and fain;

Oh yes, I loved her—love the memory
Of her sweet bridal bloom
As 'twere the pearly shadow shimmery
Of lily on a tomb.

A shadow heightens while it chastens
The beauty of this world,
As over meadows green it hastens,
Where sunset is unfurled,

And sinks all separate existence
In whitely blurring Stars,
Those silent witnesses to distance
That not a shadow mars.

This hour the Sun grants full effulgence,
As were he king or priest
Bestowing largesse of indulgence
Now backward to the East,

Or like an artist more than kingly
The landscape overthrows
With colors blended deep, or singly,
Till sapphire-like it glows

As in the backgrounds Titian painted
The Virgin far behind,
Rich-hued environments to sainted,
Incorporated mind.

Yon oak bush is a liveried varlet,
A serving imp defiant,
With humpy shoulders robed in scarlet,
Beside the forest giant

Which lifteth up a domed pavilion
Not Angelo could mock,
In shape or in its dark vermilion,
With his Italian rock.

Oh, legend from the age primeval
Comes sighing and alive,
To sing the song of that upheaval
When did Creation strive

With Something, in the primal quarry,
To carve a Love in stone,
And only made the Angels sorry
Such statue was begun!

'Tis clematis; that vine, so airy,
In Autumn bears that puff
Of lacy, greenish, slightly hairy
And delicatest stuff.

It's chambered hollow for a shelter
To elves when raindrops fall,
And run their ladies helter-skelter
To seek its goblin hall.

I know those fays;—when wanting tippie
They come a-clattering down
To break the foam upon the ripple
Of Seekonk's wavelets brown;

The mouse is priest of their carousal,
His round eyes opened shy,—
And always to an elf espousal
The rabbit cometh nigh.

Desiring elfin bride, the froggy
Comes, making lengthy jumps,
As leaps he mosses wet and soggy
Around decaying stumps;—

'Tis frolic innocent, though tipsy
Through glimmer homeward flies,
At eve, the reeling firefly gypsy,
With sparkles in his eyes,

And lighteth up with wayward twinkle
The imp frog's marshy yard,
Which ringeth full of softest tinkle
And twitter undebarr'd;—

Although the Star once lost from Seven
The nebulæ amid
Still roams, nor finds it place in Heaven
With Angels panoplied,

And as it wanders, very distant
Doth seem the moon below,—
The moon that hath no light persistent,
And but reflected glow;—

Yet constant in her white reflection,
Diana is supreme,
So making luminous selection
Forever of her theme!

You, Helen, Dian-like, my color
Transmuted shall receive,
Nor shall it than the moonlight duller
Your goddess genius leave!

But ere that day, a moan of madness
Will float a-down the street,
And bridal song of festive gladness
In mocking answer meet;

And ere that day, in churchyard yonder,
Above the mounded moss
A croaking raven long will ponder
And step a ridge across;

Then kiss me, Helen, kiss me slowly
While I am living still;
You never more can kiss,—when lowly
Is the grave—I fill.

So kiss me, Helen, quick and often,
Before the raven flies,
Whose accent nevermore will soften,
Though much a woman cries;

And let me kiss you, till the pressure
Set deep upon your soul
The regnant marks of rhythmic measure
Shall all your life control;

So shall you be a type forever,
To ages thus remain,
Of that fine womanly endeavor
Doth constancy attain.

SONGS FROM THE CLOISTER
OF AGE

THERE are cloisters of many kinds
In this world of ours below,
And their builders had many minds,
As the arching gateways show ;

But the one, whence I gaze abroad,
As I hear the whippoorwills,
Hath the columns of stone unflawed
Over granite threshold sills ;

And its sodden footpath never turns
To the primrose-bordered way,
Though the heart that's within me yearns
For the bird-belovèd spray ;

'Tis the cloister of life and awe,
Where the rule of Time hath ceased,
And 'tis under religious law,
For incarnate Age is Priest ;

And the censer, he swingeth slow,
Hath the far-off scent of musk,
That pervadeth the earth aglow
In the dewy evening's dusk ;

And the anthem, he solemn sings,
Doth, as whispering echo come
Of the voice, in the wind harp strings,
When the Morning was not dumb.

AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING,
IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE

THE winsomest maiden under the sun,—
Sang she, “Bobolink, whirl you nigh,
The holiest kisses have ’trothal begun,
And my glad tears are not dry”;

The happiest woman under the sun,—
Sang she, “Baby bye, lullaby
My loveliest, beautiful, wondering One,
Sleepy orioles nestle high”;

The woefulest widow under the sun,—
Sang she, “Wail, ye bluebirds, and cry,
The lordliest living forever is done
’Neath the spreading sunset sky”;

The weariest mother under the sun,—
Sang she, “Cling to me till we die,
Thou darlingest being the planet now on
Where the bats at midnight fly.”

TO J. C. W.

I

THE mocking bird flew singing on the air,
The mystic jay bird donned his gayest
coat

And tossed like gleaming lance his shrillest
note,
To dusky people calling everywhere ;

The rose of Cherokee went climbing there,
While off from vines on tree trunks seemed
to float

Great yellow roses that the sunbeam smote,
Thus lifted open to its amber glare ;

And thou and I, beneath the Georgian pines
Beheld the beauty, heard the happy sound,
And loved the violets that starred the ground,

But better loved the Northern sun that shines
On trees, low bending under Northern snows,
Than Southern light upon the Southern rose.

II

GOLD-TINTED fell the Autumn leaves
one day,
And pelted soft your face, while on we
drove,
As they were kisses of the tender love
Maternal Nature gave your spirit gay;

We looked across the fields a little way
And saw down drifting slantwise in a
grove
Of maples, where in play the breezes
strove,
The floating leaves that seemed a sunlit
spray;—

Oh loveliest those leaves in amber shower!
But they were dying though they shimmered
bright
And yellow, steeped translucent in the air;

E'en so, your being swaying to its hour
Of close, is smitten through with golden light,
And falleth beautiful beyond compare.

III

I HAVE been grateful often in my day,—
For gayest pleasure, e'en for saddest tears,
For work that dignified the passing years,
And for the power within my soul to pray;

For winter snows and for the bloom of May,
For little pattering feet, that to my ears
Made music such as but a mother hears
When nightfall brings her children home to
stay;

But that no flushing, bird-crossed sunset sky
Was e'er so beautiful in tint of rose,
So peaceful with its silver evening star,

As is thy spirit pausing ere it fly,
While backward all its sweetness flows,—
For this, my thanks to God most fervent are.

IV

THE ordered house, the child prone on
the floor,
The pictured Virgin,—that sweet one whose
look
Bewrayeth that her soul can scarcely brook
To be so raised, her very God before,—

Calm Venus in the corner watching o'er
The room,—the low lounge where an open
book
Reveals the verse whose rhyme my fancy
took
One moment, ere you called me to the door ;

Thus I remember all, though now is wrought
A fatal change ;—for strangers ease their dole
And find their joy, e'en where you laughed
with me !

But echo-like returns the haunting thought
Of some imagined world where scene and soul
Dwell on, and I again our home may see.

V

THE changeless law of change,—Oh, not,
 alas,

'Tis clearly graved alone on human brow,—
 For earthquakes sink the sea,—the heavens
 avow

The law, and planets like the fireflies pass,

While man doth still this petty globe harass,
 And adds his little strength with axe and
 plough

All things to change;—he maketh hillocks
 bow

Their heads, and putteth stones in place of
 grass;—

But once a poet sang, consoling mortal kind
 With story of a kingdom saved from fate,
 Where never fade the stars, nor fall the trees;

Ah, in that changeless realm within the mind
 Still stands my home with thee, inviolate,
 And memory keepeth sure from rust the keys.

A CROSS the gulfs of life to thee I cried,
Sweetheart!

Across the fated storms, the lightning
chance,
The tumult and the crowded spaces wide,
The hurry and the whirl of circumstance;

Parched were my lips, my breathing dry and
hard,
Sweetheart!

I vainly sought a still retiring goal;
My feet were broken on the flinty shard
Where did the pebbles 'neath my footsteps
roll.

But ah, with what a splendor moved the
world,
Sweetheart!

What softest winds of joy and mystery
Blew over gardens where, like blooms im-
pearled,
The lilies glowed, when thou didst come
to me!

Across the gulfs of death, to thee I cry;
We need thee so, Dear Heart, this world
and I!



LAKE GEORGE

THE lake unto its bosom drew the hills,
And held them painted proudly there at
noon,

And drowned them there before the wide-
eyed moon

While flying wildly sang the whippoorwills;

Through twenty years that piercing music
thrills,—

O haste thee, Love, and slip the moorings
soon,

And let us float as in that far-off June
Upon the lake that drowns its circling hills;

Oh drift with me to regions far remote
And dip thy oars where other waters flow
And other birds ring challenge to our boat,—

'Mid hills of God that rise, oh let us float,
And let us float o'er hills of God below,
While other song repeats the earthly note.

S. O. C.

THE boy like a mi'rage shape faded,
Or fled to the outermost spaces,
As his own loveliness aided
His flight to mysterious places;

Red brown were his eyes, like the tinting
Of oak leaves that Autumn is dooming,
When glory gives mystical hinting
Of darkness to follow illuming;

A figure of dawn, or of even,
A phantom, in shining whatever
That throweth down glory from heaven,
He vanished from eyesight forever.

E. B. C.

THE house that seemed a vivid life to
own

And sentient be itself—is senseless stone
Today, where sat my Mother on her throne,
As wife and widow, reverence round her
strewn;

She was a woman of the Titan brood,
And had the goddess-like and varied mood
Which tells of changeless iron in the blood
That still with tender sweetness is imbued.

Ah Mother, wherefore should the house roof
stand,
When all thy race hath vanished from the
land?
Why should wistaria's plumage o'er it wave?

The windows stare like vacant eyes in woe,—
But roses red, around them, redder blow,
Deep nourished by the tears upon a grave.

THERE IS A LOVE

THERE is a love that no desiring knows
Save, like a strain of music, to exist
And fluting move, like liquid amethyst,
Where temple walls the conscious soul inclose;

A sound, that seemeth incandescent, goes
This wondrous strain, where sits the melo-
dist
Of life's great marvel and its organist,
Who sends it forth while anthem onward
flows,

And in that temple human loves that throb,
All aspirations as they thwarted sob,
And all the weird, wan phantoms of this life,

Who stalk with voices singing through its
strife
Together and incarnate render part,
And singing glow,—one miracle of art.

THOMAS DAVIDSON

I HEARD the deep-souled Scottish Scholar
say,

“The Grecian order, all that wondrous rule
Of life, which made it columned vestibule
And into marble turned the human clay,—

“It died, because beneath its method lay
No sense of real love, but only cool,
Fine consciousness in studio and school
That gesture should a calm effect convey.”

The cadence of the Scholar's Gaelic voice
Was lingering richly in my charmèd ear
When, turning as by music full controlled,

I saw the Hermes,—him a child doth hold
And look surprised to feel himself rejoice
To watch a child and find its aspect dear.

THE WOMAN AND THE GIRL

“ANNE,” said the Wife, soft gazing at
the Maid,
“You do not understand the truth, who
dream
Of love in marriage as the source of bliss
That shall upspring, through placid, azure
waves,
Spontaneous blossom borne upon a flood
Of limpid beauty tranquil in all change
While moving 'twixt the pastures green of
life.
You dream of marriage love as though it
were
That lily in the pond,—white, peaceful bloom
With golden heart of passion. Ah, mine
Anne,
Such dream is sweet and pure; and there are
hours,
In wedlock, which fulfillment seem thereof—
Hours when the effort is forgotten quite
Of glacial and volcanic forces, when
Forgotten also are the rolling streams
That hollowed out the vale where rests the
lake
Which bears the quiet lilies up.

“Now hark
To what I say. Anne, marriage is the gift
Of rare, fine opportunity which God
Hath fashioned for our noblest use, so may
We mortals join Him in creative work
In this world’s studio where buildeth He
The breathing temple of the human man.
So, may we, by endeavor of our hearts’
Strong pulses, through renunciation much
Of hourly joy and madly great desire,
Perfect, each one the other’s life and deed.
And if, as often chances, only one,
Of some united pair, doth fully know
The end of marriage, or is competent,
By nature, or preceding living trained,
To do the mystic, patient marriage task,
That miracle which turneth ruby red
The water in the glass of life which waits
For color, helpless, formless by itself,
Then must the wiser, nobler one, or wife
Or husband, do the greater work, as were
Self-sacrifice the purpose ultimate
And recognized of his creation. Christ,
Who knew His mission, died to save a world.
In marriage, must the wife or husband die
As special, separate existence, so

To save the other's soul, and through that
soul
Help Christ to save the world;—and wait
and love,—
And wait again and love. Then bridal hours
Will dawn that truly bridal are,—such hours
As poets sing and lovers dream about.”

“And will the dawning glory stay till eve?”
The maiden eager asked.

Deep peace shone deep
Within the woman's eyes, who answered low,
“Love is itself a bridal rite and hour
When one is married, ready always for
Renewal after lapse,—and still it is
Renewed! The altar cup upon the shrine
Awaits communion. And the Sacrificial Love,
Like Christ, both walks the earth and up
Ascendeth to the sky.”

Reflected glow
Like moonlight radiance beamed upon the
face
Of Anne, as whispered on to her the Wife,
“Lay down your maiden hopes,—and, being
wed,
Lay down your hourly joy in marriage e'en,

Before the chiseled god of marriage, for
The image needeth sacrifices ere
It can become ideal, breathing life.
Grant unto it your all through years of toil
And weary effort,—you shall know through
all

The most perfected peace that earth can give.
There is no love, that, as emotion mere,
Can yield a never failing rapture; but
There is a love that out of sacrifice
Procureth joy. There is unselfishness
That germinateth love. And marriage is
A bond by Will created, which by Will
Should be observed,—or traitors we become
Unto God's highest law that maketh choice
Have sacramental power to weld our souls
To the supremest duty."

O H hush thee, little, sobbing heart of mine,
What boots it thus to make thy childish
moan?

Dost think, in crying, thou art all alone,
And none before had reason to repine?

Look back a thousand years, thou soul of
mine,

A myriad aching hearts each year did groan,
Their groans are silent now,—and so thy
own

Will be,—thy fate 'tis easy to divine;

Red columbine above thy grave will blow,
And over it shall stream a fragrance wild
When breezes touch, near by, the elder's
bloom;

As now, forgetful poppies make a show
Upon the turf 'neath which, quite reconciled
To death, those ancient mourners found their
tomb.

SERGIUS STEPNIAK

I

MYSTERIOUS wizard seemed he, as he
stepped

Like Pluto upward from the Russian
gloom,

Which mimicked Hades' monster-laden
womb,

And, stern controller of an epoch, leapt

Where Liberty's bespangled garments swept

The daffodils, so matching stars and bloom,

And from the glory, like incarnate Doom,

He bore her where she must his will accept,

And be companion to that Slavic Fate

Which maketh man both artist be and clay

More marvelous than other in our day;

But as he held her swooned inanimate

With rapture, yet with fear of his embrace,

I saw that he belonged to Christian race.

II

And yet who takes the sword and in the dark
Doth wield it, where the drowsing air is still,
And not a whisper giveth warning till
Down falleth low the tyrant cold and stark,

He slayeth other than his purposed mark,
He slayeth something of the righteous will
Within this world to overcome the ill,
And doeth somewhat of the Evil's work;

So evermore the text itself repeats
Of gospel and the law—yea, of them both,
And record both of Florentine and Goth;

Yet high above, John Brown the Russian
greet, —
For none, among the martyred army whole,
Than Stepniak possessed a nobler soul.

EPIGRAMS

WENDELL PHILLIPS

AN Opportunist? No, he made the chance,
And hewed its palisades of Circum-
stance.

JOHN CRAWFORD WYMAN

HIS genius had the rainbow's iridescence;
Alas, it had the rainbow's evanescence.

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

A MAN, serene, determined, simply gay,
He fought the hugest battle of his day.

JOHN WEISS

AURORA BOREALIS gave the light,
Mysterious from the chalice'd Northern
night,
When did a wizard wight
Mix diamond chips and marble dust and ice
With Southern rose perfume and Eastern
spice,
To make the soul of Weiss.

LUCY STONE

HER soul, incarnate in a lion's form,
Seemed walking by her through the
civic storm;
While she herself, so guarded, looked like
one
Was both madonna and unconscious nun.

JOHN BROWN

LIFE was the great archangel who be-
stowed on Death
The power to waft his fame upon eternal
breath.

JULIA WARD HOWE

A SYLPH-LIKE woman, delicate and
fair,
She placed Minerva's helmet on her hair,
Then rose like Venus from the cosmic sea
And sang to soldiers, "Die to make men
free."

ELLEN TERRY

AN elf she was of amber,
Not born but miracle-created,
While Ariel played a tambour
And Psyche's spirit palpitated.

ORCHARD BLOSSOMS

IN THE ORCHARD

I STOOD beside an apple tree—
An airy hummer flew
From out of leaves and looked to see
What would I do;

For on a bough, the smallest nest,
A lichen-covered cup,
Did, fibre-holden, nigh me rest,
Round opening up;

My hand, uplifted, softly lay
In pressure on the branch;
Mine eyes along the green-hued way
Did glances launch

And target met of sombre spark
From eyes were lidded round,
Where smoldering of a challenge dark
Did fierce abound,

While panting paused the creature still
Amid the budding fruit,
Its dainty bosom heaving thrill
Of passion mute;

So there we at each other gazed—
Two mortals having birth
Where blossoms flushed and cattle grazed
Upon the earth;

But I had dwelt in hall and mart,
The hummer in the wood,
And neither knew the other's heart,
For neither could!

Then, as emboldened by the sight
Of me who had not stirred,
Came dashing by in angry flight
The humming bird,

And in the nest it frankly dropped,
A title to proclaim,
Too haughty proud to be estopped
By human dame;

I never saw an elf more brave
Than was the pygmy bird,
Who so a wild defiance gave
And o'er me whirred;

The tiny bunch of feathers frail
That seemed like thistle blown,
Not substance fleshly on the gale,
Did spirit own.

So yet the little fairy flies
Where wizard beings go,
My comrade in the pageant skies
It did not know

When under orchard trees it gleamed
By nature's impulse bid,
And like a darting arrow seemed
Sun rays amid;

It had the shadowed color there,
Doth hue half hinted show
May other be in radiance where
The dewdrops glow;

But now it hath for vision mine
Those iridescent wings
That Perugino's pencil fine
To angel brings.

MINNIE

DO you know the odorous mignonette?
As you walk the garden through
Scarce you see the blossom where 'tis set,
 Though its fragrance comes to you,
And it seems as if it blows
To your senses from the rose.

But quite empty doth the garden seem
 When you walk its pathways through,
As they were the labyrinths of dream,
 And no fragrance comes to you
From the perished mignonette,
Though your tears are falling wet.





AFTER GOETHE

INTO forests I wandered,
In the wooded aisles,
On the mystery pondered
That reconciles;

Then a blossom uprising,
Like a star below,
With a beauty surprising
Emitted glow;

And enamored to break it,
With a gestured love
That was eager to take it
I stooped above;

By the blossom was spoken
Thus a word to me,
"Must I shriveled and broken
And withered be?"

With its rootlets soft buried
In mosses about,
That blossom I homeward carried
And set it out;

And now, blooming forever
In a peaceful spot,
It is lovely as ever,
And fadeth not.

SABBATIA COTTAGE

THIS moment e'en, the feet of aliens
tread

The staircase, where, in some fantastic
gown,

The lady of our revel wandered down

With step dramatic and a lifted head;

O'er other dancers now the hearth fires shed
Their gayly flickering lights from foot to
crown,

And deep, the ocean sounding near, doth
drown

The voice of other lovers lately wed—

I know the rooms are ringing with the calls
Of youth to maid—of laughing guest and
host,

While all around the children babbling talk;

Yet, in my fancy, silent are those halls,
And empty is that staircase, where, a ghost
Uprisen from the dead, I softly walk.

A JULY DAY

IT scarcely seems as if these flowers, though
near
My hand, were such in kind as sense can
know,
Or trees and grass did really live and grow
Within this air so hot and still and sheer—

This air that, like a magic crystal clear,
Hath some enchanting power o'er things,
I trow,
So firm their outlines in its mirror show,
E'en while it seems to make for them a sphere

Where sense is not, and only soul can see,
And as I gaze, I feel my eyeballs strain
And sight supernal almost come to me—

For something more than cloud is in the sky—
Those elms are strange as dreams that wax
and wane—
Yon sparrow's note is like a spirit's cry.

APPEAL

IS ever one in Heaven lonely
Who left his best beloved below,
Though circling angels sing around him,
And nowhere is the face of foe?

To be in Heaven always lonely
Must be the hopeless most of woe;
Doth God, while angels sing around Him,
An uncompanied sorrow know?

THE OLD STORY

HIS life was by a woman spoiled—
God help us who still women be!
We are ashamed, because, when coiled,
Resemblance in our hair we see
To hers who thus his purpose foiled.

FREDRIKA BREMER stood upon the
rock
That vainly tries to hold Niagara in,
And sang, "When Nature youthful was, and
felt
How good was God and that she loved Him
much,
She sent her love ascending on the spray
Niagara flingeth high to Him."

Upon those crags a young man, standing, said,
"Now hurl I life adown Niagara's flood,
For God, who gave me strength to wrestle
hard
With waves that fain would dash me on the
rocks,
Himself will bear my soul in safety up,
Whate'er He letteth happen to my flesh."
Then plunged the boy the stream within—
and God?—
It must have been a god who bore him on.

THOMAS WENTWORTH
HIGGINSON

A SOLDIER hath fallen,
A knight lieth low,
And memory doth backward
Through long seasons go,

And sees him assaulting
The bastion in town,
Where lost was the battle
But saved was renown;

And memory beholds him
Endowing the slave
With prestige and prowess
Of manhood that's brave;

And, everywhere, vision
It showeth him true
Companion of woman—
Sir Galahad too!

A scholar and critic,
For art well he wrought;
A teacher religious,
The world 'twas he taught.

Oh, proud is the mourning,
 Though sad by the bier
Where kneeleth a country
 Doth wholly revere,

For always his beauty,
 To age from his youth,
He wielded as weapon
 And sign of the Truth.

ANNA REDFIELD

SHE was a girl who seemed the bodied
sprite
Of Browning's song, a girl too fragile, slight,
Almost, to be that "phantom of delight"
Which beamed on Wordsworth's sagely rap-
tured sight.

Yet Anna, in her hands, so sylph-like, held
Life's shuttle, and its motion firm compelled
Through all the threaded maze of forces old
And new close tangled—till the church bell
knelled!

How shall my sonnet round unto complete-
ness?
Broken was the shuttle to the chiming dirge,
Broken sighs the mortal breath I vainly urge
To bear her name along in fluting sweetness.

Thirty years and five have flitted since she
died;
I recall her—who remembers her beside?



INTERLUDES



THE WAR SECRETARY

THE SECRETARY

SO Curtis calls me rank law-breaker! Bah!
That's speech by Benjamin to make one
smile;

It cannot be his pulses know the ache
Of sympathetic throb for captives. He,
Ben Curtis, sat up nights and toiled through
days

To find interpretation of the law
Which would consign a little girl to chains,
Tight drawn around her tiny wrists, so
dragged

She might be easily to market sale.
I sat a child, on Lundy's knee, and though
I never was an Abolitionist,
The man I am prefers to tinkle bell,
And order to the fortress Lafayette
Some man or woman, but suspected of
The deed or wish is treacherous, and let
The little children, Christ-beloved, go free.

Oh, yes, I know Judge Curtis thought to save
The Union, when he hunted fugitives
From off the Bay State soil, while uncles
beamed,

And brothers, and his brothers, by the law,

All clapped him on the back approvingly,
Or did his mandates. Oh! well, let him have
All glory that recording angels choose
To give him for his Union saving zeal.
I'm Union saving too,—or making o'er,
As Butler says, in newer shape,—and, faith,
My task befits my fancy better much
Than would the hounding one that Curtis
chose,
Whate'er may be the law, or way old texts
May still be read by blinking eyes of age;
That man is idiot, not a statesman, who
In hour of crises standeth letter chained
Before the need for stretching both his legs,
And kicking something hard.

Let Curtis growl
Until his legal soul is satisfied
With consciousness, supreme, that he has
raised
And full exploited every quibble, that
Might damn our Nation, ere 'tis wholly born,
I am its rough physician, and I'll pull
It through.

*[A messenger enters and gives a letter,
which he reads]*

THE SECRETARY

That's proof enough. I smelt that rat
In darkness nibbling at the cheese.

[*He touches a bell, and then whispers to
the messenger, who goes out*]

THE SECRETARY

There is

A cell now vacant in Fort Lafayette;
It will an inmate have tonight, who'll howl
The midnight through alone, and Curtis will
In most judicial manner rage at morn!

My head aches,—well, I would incarcerate
My life in that low cell, which ne'er again
Is empty, having once been filled; there would
I lay these weary limbs of mine to save
My country,—and I think that grave will
yawn

For me before my work is fully done. So be!
I am content, if Lafayette be full
This night of traitors safely housed.

[*A child enters*]

THE SECRETARY

Ah, Tad,
I'll make you now lieutenant of the guards.

THE CHILD

And can I orders give to them, to march
Or wait all night before the White House?

THE SECRETARY

Yes.

THE CHILD

And must my father do as I command?

THE SECRETARY

The President must every word of yours
Obey.

THE CHILD

And Mother too?

THE SECRETARY

That's doubtful, Tad;
The law is not quite settled as to that,
But here is your commission signed and sealed.

THE CHILD

I'll practice with the guards tonight, and go
Tomorrow morn and catch old Lee and bring

Him straight to you. What will you do with
him?

THE SECRETARY

Lieutenant Lincoln, if you please, I have
Not quite decided yet.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

1863

He sits by a table in his office. He throws a newspaper on the floor. The sheet has headlines which announce the recent delivery of an oration in Cooper Institute, New York.

SO, "all the dogs, Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, bark At me!" Well, when the thunder pealeth loud,
Who cares for yelping of a cur behind
A shed, because his kennel door is closed,
And puppy is a little overdrenched?

Ah, but, when loose the dogs of war are slipped,
Suppose that Cerberus joins the pack to filch
From every raging hound his bit, as sop
To that enormous appetite, he nursed,
In age long hunger, at the mouth of hell,—
If that should chance, the dogs we lead along
Our chosen warpath to the victor's field
Might, snarling, turn upon each other, and
Upon that greedy Cerberus, even more
Than on the lawful foe, although the hound

Of destiny do call himself a god,
Olympic born, and not a hell hound fiend.

Diana's stag hounds tore a mortal once,
Who only glimpsed eternal loveliness
And ne'er possessed it. Ah, I wonder if
The myth hath meaning such;—and doom
befell

Because he only caught a glimpse, and lacked
The wit and courage on to press, and seize
The stainless creature of the moon, and so
Proclaim, and make, himself the peer of gods.

[*The Secretary rises, walks about, sits down
again, picks up the paper, reads a while,
then slowly lays it aside, and speaks*]

He once imagined necromancy, that
Should cause my word, of some preceding day,
To ring throughout the upper atmosphere,
The very moment that I spoke below,
Contrasting speech to other purpose, so
The listening crowd should hear it all at once;

He called one utterance, "deviltry,"—"di-
vine,"
The other. Whew! 'Tis lucky we're a race
At bottom amiable,—we Yankees.

Ah,

I will permit my tongue to whisper in
Mine ear, I'm sorry after all, and know
My wife will sadly grieve, because those lips,
Bee-kissed to honeyed bitterness of breath,
Have blown such potent blast abroad, that
thick

The air around me seems with golden spears,
Most beautiful, but deadly,—hurtling shafts,
Well aimed at my bare breast, and piercing it
In time and tune of faultless melody,
Yet pointed as Apollo's darts that slew
The sons of Niobe. And, so serene,
Stands Phillips, thus discharging bolts of
death,
As does the marble image of the god.

I wish I had a presence like to his;
The figure, feature, voice, and graceful
pose;—
I've done the best I could with nasal twang,
And wagging head, and spiteful Nature's gift
Of all endowments are unsuitable
For practice of the oratoric art.
Yes, pretty well I've done,—at Freeman's
side,—
Poor idiot, whom I saved from undeserved

Calamity;—and on the prairies too,
Where men, mad, shouted great amens to
 words
Of mine,—and in the halls of Congress when
I dared confront the Southern law, and speak
Of law was “higher;”

 Home I went that eve,
And how she smiled and wept and softly
 kissed,
As with betrothal gladness o'er again,
“You shall both prophet and the leader be,”
She cried; “As unto Moses, so to you
The law hath given been. 'Tis graven, not
On stony tablets; here, upon my heart
And in your mind, the perfect rule is writ.
O Love of mine, I now anoint you priest
And true Lawgiver, and your feet shall tread
The Promised Land; beside its flowing brooks
And o'er its prairie pastures, stretching west
From one free ocean to another—free.
You shall not merely gaze, from far, across
The intervening desert ere you die;
Love, Love, you shall our country's legions
 lead
In triumph through each Rocky Mountain
 pass

And Southward, to the shores beside the
Gulf."

Thus spoke she, panting on my breast, my
wife,

Who had for thirty years of married love
Looked beautiful to me as on the day
When first we wedded.

[*He sighs, pauses a moment, then
continues*]

Once Phillips praised
My power to sway an audience. It was when
We both orated to New England folk
By Plymouth Rock, and high as Heaven flew
Our double aspirations soaring; wide
As ocean, level as its surface, seemed
The pathway he and I might tread to goal
Of conquest.

I had wished to meet with men
Belonging to the section most extreme
Of abolition purpose, when I went
That year to Massachusetts. Him I saw
And much admired. I know when I behold
A man whose soul is diamond firm, yet hath
The tints are opaline, warm flashing through

Its facets, with a changeful constancy.
Such gem,—creation of Aladdin's lamp,
Not chemic process, is his genius.

Now,

Aloof he stands, his sapphire-colored eyes
Brimful of azure scorn, the while his lips
Refuse to smile at any clever trick
Which would provoke a grin on other face.
I wonder what he thinks he sees, when thus
He gazes? I suppose he fancies he
Perceives the way each thread is spun that
makes

My nature's warp and woof, and knows if
flax,

Or wool, or cotton, or if shoddy be
Both thread and woven fabric;—well, if sure
He knows my loom and product, and the
thread

Behooveth best its shuttle's motion, well
He knows a lot of things I don't,—Not I.

Yes, on my word unto myself, although
I know I'm clever, not I am acquaint,
Quite fully, with a man who bears the name
Of Seward. He surprises me at times.

'Tis rather strange, the things a man can do

And those he can't. I could with Davis chaff
And pleasant converse hold, and dinners give
To all pro-slavery men before the war,
And laugh with every rank Secessionist;
I can Abe Lincoln manage now and then,
Play bluff with Butler,—beat him too, and
keep

Him back, when he would stop the Emperor
From marching into Mexico. I could
Twist Adams round my thumb, and twirl his
wits

Upon a bobbin compromise. I can
Outwit Lord Russell,—subtly turn defeat
To victory, and spread a future snare
For England's foot, anent those two "old
men"

Who went to sea in bowls of leaky law;

I can retain the love I love, and hold
—I think—her faith until I half believe
I'm worthy of it. Ah, I am too sure
She would forgive the flaw she seeth not!

I can keep Sumner's friendship, though 'tis
task

A trifle difficult; for he's a man
Of most punctilious righteousness. But there's

A spot in Sumner's 'cello heart that yields
A note, accordant to my practiced touch,
And vibrant of an olden love and wish;
Thus can I cope with Sumner;—but one thing
I cannot do,—make Phillips deem I am
A *bona fide* champion of the law
That's "higher." Well, he is particular
About that law! There's nothing else to say.

[*Leans back in his chair and laughs. After
a moment he says*]

And now I'll write my wife and tell her how
Yon white rose gleameth in the sunlight there
Beyond the window pane,—each petal with
A moonstone shimmer, warmer, finer than
The changeless chastity of ocean's pearl.—
Diana's moonstone,—and her beauty
 glimpsed,
Not caught and held! Ah me; O Rose, O
 Stone,
Of radiance made, that holds supernal glow
White,—white yet throbbing even in the
 glare
Of noonday sun!—I'll write unto my wife,—
About the sunlight and the rose and moon.

SIC SEMPER

1865

[*A man lying on a floor tries vainly to lift himself and speaks*]

I HAD a dream, so must have slept. I heard

A voice which cried, "Sic semper";—that was all;

'Twas but a moment that I dozed; then came
The frightful pain that woke me. Up I rose,
And dragged me hither to this barn. Ah,
God,

I am one mass of pain. "*Sic semper*," still
I hear the words as erst I shouted them,
But not the voice which speaketh is mine own.
'Tis that which cried them through my fitful
sleep;

Yet, sometimes doth it change, and taketh first
One accent, then another, till it seems
As though a file of angels, clarion-voiced,
Were marching by me, each one uttering
words

Announcing doom, of which I only hear
Those two, "*Sic semper*"—fearful echo sound
Both of each other's cries and of mine own

Which rang across a mimic stage—quick
changed
To setting of immortal tragedy,
The greatest since that one at Harper's town
Whereat I too assisted. "*Sic semper*,"—thus
The phrase reverberates,—but never moves
To end that would declare a tyrant's doom;—
No, never, though I strain my sense to hear!

What shall be always unto him, whose head
My pistol touched that eve?

What shall it be
Forever unto me?

I wonder did
He suffer much and long before he died.
O God, I cannot kneel,—but lying prone
I pray he neither knew, nor felt, nor heard
The crying of his wife and children round
His couch. There is no nerve in me that
thrills
To cruel wish. My God—not one.

A name
I'm trying now to speak,—and cannot;—
God's,

And Edwin's.—I can speak those names,
when I
Would pray or sob along their cadences,—
Not his. My lips are paralyzed; my brain
Is numb, when I would speak or think that
name,
Although I ever see his image clear
And white upon a cloud.

It seems to me
If I could cry to him aloud, that he
Would succor me,—would come adown those
ranks
Of angels, trumpet-tongued, proclaiming
doom,
Would raise his hand, and bid them all be
still;
So silence merciful should soft surround
My soul, now deafened by those clarion cries
Unending.

Ah, will Edwin bear a pain
Thus always in his heart because of me,
And never in the lowest whisper breathe
My name,—tongue-tied unto its syllables,
As I unto another's on this day?

What! Here they come!—Was that my
voice that shrieked?

God, but I hope none heard it of the men
Who come, avengers of the blood that fell
Down trickling from the slowly sinking head
Of majesty.

Ah, not alive will I
Be ta'en. I cannot fight or run or hide;—
But I can stand before yon marksman's gun
And take his fire. Oh! can I even stand?

I must. I must. So—So! Now, soldier
shoot
Between the flames around me. Edwin will
Deep bless thee for that bullet evermore.
Ah! Ah!

Great Lincoln pardon me!

My lips

Have spoke his name!

And, having spoken, sure
My spirit hath become of mercy, where-
Soe'er it goes.—“*Sic Semper.*”

ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS

1880

A chamber in Washington, D. C. An old man, very small and fragile, and an evident cripple, sits in a wheeled chair. He is speaking to a fair-faced, middle-aged woman, who is very simply dressed in drab-colored garments.

I NEVER did desire the bond should be
So ruptured, and the country cloven twain;
Just read my record. But there's frantic blood
In me, and at the last it maddened grew;
And I believed in Georgia,—loved the state,
And rioted in dream of empire.

Well,

This hand of mine is smaller much than yours,
Yet it has often clutched the bowie knife;
You say my eyes are as a woman's, soft?
They stared up straight and open once at him
Whose fingers grasped my throat, as prone
I lay
Beneath his body, and I cried, "Strike on,
Cut deep!" It makes me smile today, to
think
He dared not murder me outright that hour.
Do you suppose his conscience stirred? Mine
slept

Most peaceful sleep whene'er I drew a dirk.
It was the fashion of my time, the whim
Of bravery in the male and Southern soul
To draw the knife. Perhaps, as Hamlet says,
However, 'twas a custom, honored most
When not observed. But I observed it well.

I was such pigmy in my stature, that
My spirit overflowed its limits, mad,
And entered in my bowie knife!

Yet stroke
Of mine did never quite let out a soul
Unto the universal spaces.

Yes,
Today, as sit I helpless in my chair,
I'm rather glad of that; though scarce I know
If I've backslidden in opinion toward
Your Quaker doctrines. Still the Prince of
Peace
Does seem more real now to me than once;—
And He would ne'er have drawn a bowie
knife.

What think I of the Union and its cause?
And of our present nation-building task?

I've taken oath,—received forgiveness too,

Dreed out my weird in prison first besides ;
Done all the necessary drudgery hard.
I hope I am a loyal gentleman,
But scarcely feel myself repentant sinner.

I did prefer, and still I should, a league
Of States; each one with local pride and law
And song and old tradition. Davis played
The Southern federation false in that,
And tried to rule as despot o'er a realm
Down lying,—wide and even plain beneath
His sway. While I desired the hills and vales,
Diversified in form, and every road
The peasant, going to his wedding, traced
Between the mountains, nor surveyor knew;—
And so I broke with Davis,—that is all.

I never said it quite, but on my word
If we must be a welded nation, not
A linked, contracted chain of equal rings,
I do prefer the Great Lakes bound us north,
And so on, south and east and west
Betwixt the gulf and oceans, as we learned
The atlas when at school.

The Negroes? Oh,
I squirmed at first that they should walk on
floors

Of parlors and of Congress halls and march
All grinning to the ballot box. I felt
Exactly as if pigs and sheep and cats
Were voodooed into images of men
By wizards foul, and set above the race
For whom a God had made the earth. I had
Most honest spoken, ere the war began,
When said I God had meant that they should
serve,

And slavery be the changeless corner stone
Unto the temple of the white man's life.
But now I'm old;—a helpless invalid
I sit, and look with ancient eyes upon
An altered world, where hues and forms are
not

The same as those that in my youth I saw;
And Lincoln's dead, and Sumner too.

I live,

And stare around me, and I sometimes think
God's purposes I failed to understand,
Hot-headed in my fancies. Sumner full
Believed in equal human brotherhood.
Not quite did Lincoln. There is sweetness in
That thought of brotherhood to age like mine,
That feeleth need of tenderness. Perhaps
Fraternal love is corner stone the best
For this Republic.

Nay, but spare me more,
Nor force, from Southern lips, admission full!
But if my manhood's strength was given
wrong

It is tremendous thought to have in age,
And shoulders such as mine,—they well may
bend

Beneath such burden of mistake. Although
I try to lift mine eyes with steady glance
Above a million graves of men who might
Today have walked the pastures green of life,
Had we surrendered slavery to a world
That had decreed its death.

A MAN UNKNOWN TO HISTORY

He sits pillowed in a large chair on an open porch, over which a banksia rose vine is in full bloom. He is about eighty years old. A younger man sits near him, who has a typical New England face, narrow, fine-featured, and blond. The old man speaks brokenly, frequently pausing, and also often, without pause, interrupting himself, both because of physical and emotional distress and disturbance. He wears a faded Confederate army overcoat.

WELL, yes, I reckoned that he was my
son;
He might have been, I knew; but,—it is hard
To make you Abolition fellows know
The way we Southern gentry feel,—though
why
You should not understand, I cannot guess!
No, not at all.

Look here, you're white like me,
Though black Republican, I'm told; now
think,
I'm white, and feel so,—why don't you feel
white?
A Negro wench may bear a Negro boy,

A little yellow-stained; those things occurred;
It was a Negro still,—the mother's stamp
Upon it deep. Of course; Oh, damn it! help
Me out I say! I want to use a speech
That's decent. Always did I speak as though
Some lady might be listening.

Well, the boy,—
What was I saying? Why, I babble now,
My wife, she would have laughed to hear my
tongue
So stammer. Such a laugh she had! 'Twas
like
The music of the mocking bird around
Our home,—our fine, old Southern home, in
years
Before you Northern meddlers, and that man,
From England, brought a discord to the land.

Such happy Christmas gayeties we had!
My wife was like angelic hostess then;
The neighbors drove plantations o'er to ours,
And stayed for days, and back with them we
went;
'Twas all one holiday. The earth was glad.
And how the boys, they courted,—had to
court

If they would win! Our Southern girls are
proud
And pure;—the purest women in the world,
The fairest and most faithful maids and
wives.
We went to church in Christmas week;—
communed,
And never in our home we danced; my wife
Thought dancing sinful; and she had her way,
In that.

I think a gentleman should yield
A great deal to his wife's religion. When
He comes to sit, as oft I sit, upon
A wide veranda quite alone, he will
Be glad he never danced—before her eyes,
When looked they on him full of holy light,
Rebuking, yet so grieved, that they must look
Reproach! You know that light in women's
eyes!

Oh, no, you can't. Your Northern females are
Unlike our high-souled ladies. They are cold
And prim, or vixenish, when they reprove.
I say I know whereof I speak! I knew
A Northern spinster once;—a governess
My sisters had, when we were children;

No,

I thank my God, I never trod the soil,
Polluted so, in Massachusetts, by
The steps of men who sought to steal our
wealth,
(Because we had a kind could walk and eat,)
And tried to drive it in their muddy yard
Of level surface, there to idly bask.

We let our servants in the Christmas time
rejoice;
Gave presents, handkerchiefs and extra food.
It made my wife right happy so to give!
We let them all get drunk, and only laughed
To see them lying round in lazy sleep.

I had to hire that yellow youngster out;
He needed breaking in. His saucy eyes
Annoyed my wife, although her temper was
An angel's, but, of course, she had her whims.
—I'm old and sick. I can't restrain myself!
Give me a drink. She always used that glass!
White as its crystal was her soul,—a jar
Of earthenware was mine;—and yet 'twill
stand
Some day, in heaven, by hers. The potter
shapes

His clay and mixes it for diverse use,—
What is the text?

Oh, yes, I mind me now;
It was the boy that I was telling of;
I did not like to flog him hard, and sent
Him to a nigger manager, far-famed
The country through for daring, forceful skill.
Back came the boy, one day, all gashed and
bruised
(He had been kicked as well as flogged a bit).
He stood before me;—he was seventeen;
(’Twas that which angered so my lovely wife,
For we had wedded been a score of years;)
Oh, well, the boy,—he had the maddest eyes,
So big and wild and stag-like! Once I shot
A stag;—I know the way such creatures look
When wounded, staggering unto death, they
glare,
Before they fall. The boy had such a glance,
There standing beautiful and dark, though
stained
With blood and grimed with dirt, and torn
with thorns,—
(He had run barefoot through the woods,
you see!)
Say, do you know how beautiful those boys

And girls—mulatto-colored, sometimes are?
Oh, yes, he begged me then to take his part
Nor send him to the driver more; he did!

I'm old—I do not care,—but in my eyes the
wind
Is blowing. Move the screen. Thanks, that
is all.

What could I do? My wife was sick that
day.
How could I cross the fancy of her heart?

'Twas our misfortune, that we gentlemen,
Here in the South, must such a prayer refuse,
As was that boy's. We walked upon a crust;
The gulf below was worse than icy flood.
Our wives and daughters, all their happiness,
Their safety too,—those were the things at
stake.

Our place within the Union, all our rights;—
One Negro unsubdued was like a torch,—
And every dwelling is combustible!

What though the boy resembled so a stag?
He was a slave and must a slave remain,
And as a slave submit unto the whip:—

Ugh,—but my flesh crawls at the thought
today!

I sent him back,—then hid myself and cried.

You Northern fools could never understand,—
Or would not,—all we had to do and bear,
We Southern gentlemen of family.

Pshaw, yes, he was my property. Why not?
I sold his freedom to him at the last.

My wife was ill again,—I would have sold
My soul for her,—say naught of Fred. Be-
sides,

It made him free. Why should not you be
glad

One nigger got off so, when I was poor?

[*A Pause*]

I was the oldest soldier in the field,
Through four long years of war; 'twas hard,
hard work.

We fought for liberty,—and lost,—and lost.

My wife was dead when came I broken home,
And Southern freedom lay beside her slain!

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Oh! damn your drivel talk of niggers now!

And yet the boy was beautiful and tall;
Know you if he is living in the North?
What! he? A mighty man, and high es-
teemed?
Don't jest; how could a Negro be such man?

I'm quite in earnest; Southern gentlemen,
Like me, took always kindly interest
In their old slaves. I do,—ungrateful beasts
Although they are!—No, no, I choke;—Let
go!

I'm dying! Well, why not? The Southern
flag
Has fallen;—it is right that now I fall!

O flag of beauty and the will of God!
I tell you God Almighty meant that we
Should rule these Southern lands, and sail the
streams
And own the Gulf of Mexico, and all
Adjacent territories, and be lords,
In free and equal law;—above the serfs
Whom God created such, on purpose. Yes!
Or else they fell to that estate; and just

It is they there remain, so we can move,
We Saxon men, in majesty, around,
Unhampered in our great desires and joy
Of haughty living. That's what Stephens
said;—

I know. 'Tis what the Bible means. My
wife

Oft read the Bible; she declared 'twas so.
You infidels have got up notions, but
The Bible is against you,—and the law
Our fathers framed; it was against you too.
How dared you tamper with the compact
thus,
The Constitution? Well, we'll not obey
Your patched, new-fangled one; I speak out
plain.

A nigger have a man's ambition? Stuff!
A nigger has but sauciness,—that's all.

But I am dying,—never more shall see
The Christmas glory in the land, nor hear
The banjo in the Negro's hut, when low
The sinking sun drips liquid rubies down
Upon the old plantation fields beside
The swamp.

[*A Pause*]

[173]

On, on boys, charge the Yankees back!
The mudsill spoilers of our homes.

I'm faint.
But one word more! If ever you see Fred,
Take him aside, and say his father loved
Him all the while, and wished that he were
white.

Dear Lord, receive my soul,—wash out my
sins,—
Forgive me! O Estelle!—Estelle!

A MAN OF THE PERIOD

He is between fifty and sixty years old, tall, dark, and thin-faced. He wears a loose negligee costume, and sits on a wide, open veranda, the wooden posts to which are a little rickety and weather-stained. No one is with him, but he acts as if he thought some one were sitting in an empty chair near him, and he seems to speak to such a person.

OH, are you there again, like Banquo's ghost,—

Your face much whiter than it used to be?
I'm not afraid of you, although you wear
A shroud, to which the soggy mosses cling
That grow in marshes;—and I dare to look
On you, and without flinching tell to you
The legend of my life. The tale is brief.

I was a Harvard boy; I sat within
Its academic hall, and heard a voice
Unlike all others ever sounded through
The palpitating ether to mine ears;
'Twas like the ringing of a golden bell,
That ringeth sole, in answer to a chime,
Unheard by mortal men, of instruments
In Heaven; and I saw a face that brought

Full revelation of the poet's dream—
Who likened Arthur's to an Angel's, when
The great Pendragon flamed above his helm,
And he had clear announced the law of God,
Its justice and its mercy both.

I went
From college home to Mississippi, where
My father kept a mourning fast, each year,
Upon the day the Yankee Presidents
Proclaimed Thanksgiving with their brazen
tongues.

I vowed unto my sire, my bride and soul,
That since I had been born too late to fight
For Southern rights, in open field, I would
Be champion daily,—by the homestead hearth,
Beside the rivers, in the graveyards, fields,
And in the courts, and never would I yield
A point of law, or any chance that could
Be seized, unto the Northern wish or thought.

That vow I kept. I heard its mandates new,
Each year, interpreted for newer case.
I followed blast as of a herald's call
With summons here and there, through fog
and fen,

Through city streets, and highways long and
wide,
Through hidden paths, and tangled under-
growth
Of passion and of action.

Every inch
Of way I fought, with weapon whatso'er
My hand could grasp; and every inch I rode
Whatever steed would bear me on.

I saw
A blended mass of living blackness stand
Between me and my goal. I rode it through,
And drove its fragments foul adown the night.

That's all I have to say,—save this, that now,
Without or sense or reason, sounds that voice
Of golden beauty in my ears, as erst
I heard it in Fair Harvard's hall, and these
Are words it saith, "Our God intends all men
Should equal be and free." And, while I hear,
I think of faces black as yours was when
You said you were my brother, and I shot
You by the ballot box. Then rises clear
A great Avenging Angel to my sight,
Fair-faced, and golden-haired, and azure-
eyed;
He cometh from that blackened mass and loud

He saith, as certain of his right to speak
The holiest words that sinful, mortal men
Ere heard, "The little ones of Christ thou
hast
Offended, and, through them, thy Master."

Then

A wall of green and shining cymophanes
Comes forward, like a living form, across
The cotton field. He turns, and lo, each stone
Forth darteth fire, as of a living eye,
Green, wondrous, meeting thus the azure ray
Of his commanding glance, till all the air
Between is full of intermingled beams
Of color, green and blue, all vivid, yet
Not clashing,—only glowing side by side,
And full athwart each other. Then he lifts
A hand, as white and inly radiant as
It fashioned were of fibrous, flexile pearl,
And at the gesture, slow the gleaming wall
Divideth, while a saffron mist uprises,
And, veiling, hides those chrysoberyl eyes;
His hand then sinketh down and leaveth trail
Like moonbeam in the air, while quick the
fog
Back rolleth, as a curtain, to reveal
A host of seraphs, clad in green and gold,

Large-eyed and solemn, moving on to me
Across the cotton field. He, whirling round,
Comes forward, leading them, and scimitars,
Fierce radiating silver lances light,
Rise flashing, held in every seraph grasp.
They are most terrible in beauty, thus
On-coming after him.

Ah look, I beg!
Protect me from him and his seraphs, though
I shot you down and dragged you to the
swamp
And hurled you deep into the muddy ooze.

God! can it be you are my brother born,
And meant as such by God,—though black
you are?
And I—I knew it not.

HELEN PITTS DOUGLASS

SHE rose up, queenly in her womanhood
As Duchess May of whom the poet sang,
And standing thus dark-eyed and calmly
mouthed,
She flung her white kid glove full in the teeth,
Close-set for snarling, of a country's scorn.
She flung a glove as white as pearl, as soft
As her pure fingers, and she said: "Make you
A Nation out of human fragments, this
Or that of God's creation,—as you please;
For I will wed the man I love and deem
So great, that it is honor to my soul
He deigns to reach to me his hand with faith
That mine hath equal clasp. So will I wed
And ride, both through the castle gate with
him,
And on the castle wall, and proudly hurl
Myself down battlemented heights with him,
If need shall be of such companion-act.
So will I do whatever be your dreams
Of science and heredity, whate'er
Your racial preference, or purposes
Of empire. For, behold me, I today
Am soul incarnate and alive to love
That maketh duty. I obey the law

Which is for living women. I have seen
A human god and heard his call to come
And be a goddess at his side.”

She spoke,
Then moved majestic from the glaring light
Filled full of curious eyes. Back smiling
scorn
Of womanhood for social scorn, she went
Unto a temple which she entered in,
A ring upon her hand. There she abode
Thenceforth with wifely dignity.

L'ENVOI

“SHALL I not see the flowers again,” she
said,
My mother, ere she died, and wistfully,
With old, sweet eyes did gaze and question
me
Who could not speak, but sought to smile
instead;—

In purple glory doth wistaria spread
Along her house, red is her hawthorn tree,
And near her cottage by Atlantic sea
Sabbatia lifts her radiated head.

That bright pink flower she loved, to thee I
bring,
And wonder as the pregnant year moves on
What blossoms open whither she has gone;

Ah, who will tell me any secret thing
That God keeps hid in His immensity,
While here I wait the doom that comes for
thee?

ROSE petal now of God, art thou, mine
own,—

A star-like part of that effulgent light,
That central Flower whence radiance
streameth bright

To all the suns and systems in the zone,—

While I, prostrated on the earth am thrown,
And over me, thus lying in the night,
Dark shadows chasing phantoms take their
flight

And winds of destiny in passing moan;—

If God, in truth, thy being doth inclose
Will He permit a prayer to thee through
tears,

Since I can use no common speech with thee?

If not mine earthly, be my Heavenly Rose
And breathe, I pray, thy sweetness down the
spheres

To trance my spirit with thy love for me!



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